

I. *An Account of the taking and taming of Elephants in Zeylan, by Mr. Strachan, a Physician, who lived 17 years there.*

ALL the Natives within 20 miles from the Sea-coast betwixt *Matura* and *Negumbo* are subject to the *Hollanders*, and know the Duty and Service which their *East India* Company requires of them; therefore when Orders are given to hunt the Elephants, they pitch upon a convenient place for a Warrant or Park, which is broad at the entrance, and turn the farther in the more narrow, so that at the end it is so narrow that an Elephant cannot turn himself; yet this narrow place is so long, that 20 Elephants may stand one behind another. The Park being perfected, the *Koolrale*, who is the Head or Chief of the *Kool* (which is to say in *English* a Shire) does Order the Inhabitants who dwell thereabout to their places, who make a Circumference about the Woods, where they know that Elephants are, which will be the length of 60 *English* miles. At first one man stand from another at the distance of about 5 poles, or 25 yards, and kindles Fire in the spaces between them, then by shooting, crying, beating of Drums, founding of Horns, the Elephants retire towards the Park, and so from time to time the Men follow, shooting and making a noise, until the Circumference be so little, that they stand upon one anothers side. The Elephants, when they find themselves inclosed within the Park, make more resistance, some turning back upon the Men, but Posts are ready standing betwixt the Men and the Elephants, and long Stakes lying upon the ground, they have only to lift these Stakes, and make the ends of these Stakes fast to the Posts, and thus the Elephants are enclosed within the Park. Then by following the Elephants, and casting of Fire-brands, they chase them still farther toward the end of the Park, and closing up the passage behind them, by setting up, and laying Stakes athwart the Posts, until at
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last they are all entered into the narrow place, where they cannot turn themselves. But because there are many sorts of Elephants, some being a great deal higher before than behind, and many who never have the two long Teeth; others are of a more savage Nature, which are known by their Eyes and Face, having a fierce Tyger-look, and will be for no service, although they be kept 10 years: such ones the King of *Candie* keeps for punishing of Transgressors, for they kill all persons that come within their reach. One of them the late King of *Candie* (who never in all his life after the *Hollanders* had beat the *Portugueses* from *Zeilan*, and not performing their promise to that King, who had been a great help to the *Hollanders* in that War) sent to the *Hollanders* when I was there, in recompence of some Presents, which the *Hollanders* had sent to move him to Peace; among which Presents a Lyon from the *Cape of Good Hope* was sent, as being the King of all other Beasts, but he never would let these Presents come within 20 miles of his presence; the *Hollanders* kept the same Elephant in a place by himself still tyed, being at great pains every day to bring him to the Water side betwixt two tame Elephants, the *Hollanders* intending to shew the regard they had to that Kings Gifts. Such like Elephants being among the other Elephants in the fore-mention'd Park, are kept out of the narrow entrance by casting Fire-brands upon them when they draw near the narrow entrance, and endeavour to kill them by Guns, and cutting off their Snout, by which they take all their Victuals; which being cut, they perish for hunger when they are escap'd, for the Natives being very swift will come very near them with their Swords. When all the choice of the Elephants are entered into the narrow passage, there are Posts put athwart, so that none can come back; the rest that are not fit for service have liberty to escape.

It is easie to conceive how the Natives did invent the chasing Elephants by Drums and Noise, because it is observed that they themselves are affrighted by Drums. I did
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hear an Ancient *Portuguese* relating, that when his Country-men were in possession of this Island, they did pursue the Natives too far up among the Woods and Hills, the *Ceiloneses* by this means got the advantage of the *Portuguese*, and killed every man of them except one Drummer, who did observe them not to draw near where they did hear the Drum, he therefore beat upon his Drum continually; the *Ceiloneses* thinking that the greatest power was where the Drum did beat, did not come near him, and by this means he saved his life.

When the Elephants have been a while settled in the narrow passage, they are one by one taken to the Stable, being tyed fast between two tame Elephants bred for that purpose, the point of whose long Teeth are cut: If the wild Elephant be troublesome, they will hold his Trunk with their Trunk, and beat him with their Teeth, a Man sitting upon each of the tame Elephants, to direct them by a Staff, upon the end of which is a little Hook, wherewith he touches his Head, and orders the tame Elephant as he pleases, without a Bridle, or the like. When they come into the Stable, they are led betwixt two Posts, and Stakes put athwart before their Breasts and under their Bellies, and so tyed that they cannot stir, nor lye down upon the ground; for if they should be permitted to lye down they would turn heavy, sorrowful, and would not eat, and dye. They are this way fed and nourished with the Trunk of *Waltugas*, or *Plantains*. The Trunk of this Tree they love better than any other food, and with these Trunks they are fed in the Ships; when they have been nourisht so six weeks they begin to be tractable, and are fastened only with one foot tyed with Cords; and if the Merchants come from *Bengal* they are sold and convey'd to the Ships; if the Merchants have no use for them, or that they cannot agree about the price, they feed them with Leaves of the *Coco* Tree, until 12 weeks be past after their being taken, and then they are as tame as a Dog, and eat Grass with the Oxen in the Fields.

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When the Elephants are put on board the Ships, there is a thing prepar'd of 15 or 20 double Sailcloth, which is laid about his Breast, Belly and Sides, and is tyed together upon his Back, whereunto Ropes are fastened; then he is led into the Water betwixt Elephants bred for the purpose, upon which a Man sits to govern him, and another Elephant (upon which sits a Man) goes behind the Elephant that is to be shipp'd, and when this Elephant is unwilling to enter the Water, the Elephant that is behind puts his Head to the foremost's hinderparts, and presses him forward, which will cause any person to laugh to behold the same; when he is got deep enough in the Water he is tyed to the Boat, the other Elephants return, and he swims after the Boat to the Ship, where he is haled over into the Ship.

But there is lately invented a more convenient way, which is thus: There is prepared a big Vessel, flat bottom'd, cover'd with Planks like a floor, so that this floor is almost of the height of the Key, then the side of the Key and the Vessel are adorned with Green Branches, so that the Elephant does see no Water till he be in the Ship.

When one Elephant swims to the Ship, or otherwise crosses a deep River, nothing of him can be seen only his Snout thorough which he breathes: and when he is washed upon a River side, he ordinarily lyes with his Head upon the bottom of the Water flat alike with his Body, and although one side of him be above Water, his Head will be under, holding only his Snout above Water through which he breathes.

When the Elephants are tame, they are very docil and tractable, so that they will lye upon their Belly when Men are to get up and ride upon them.

If they fall at any time, altho upon even ground, they either dye immediately, or languish after that until they dye: their Body being of so great a bulk, is the cause of the harm they get by a fall.

If an Elephant frequents a Plantation of Fruit-Trees of the Natives, for no Hedges can keep him out, they make a point upon a heavy piece of Wood, and hangs it on a branch of a Tree under which the Elephant uses to come; and at night a Man sits watching upon that Branch, and when the Elephant comes under the Branch the Man cuts the Cord, and so the point of the Wood falls a foot deep in his Back, by which means the Elephant languishes and dyes; but when the *Hollanders* get intelligence hereof, they are punish'd severely.